

REMARKS

Claims 1-13 remain in the application and stand rejected.

Priority Claim

The present application was filed on September 29, 2000, claiming priority to U.S. Provisional Application 60/157,253 filed on October 1, 1999. Acknowledgment of the claim of priority to the provisional application is respectfully solicited.

Claim Rejections 35 U.S.C. § 102

Claims 1-13 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,101,419 to Kennedy et al. ("Kennedy"). The rejection is respectfully traversed.

Claim 1 is patentable over Kennedy at least for reciting: "adding at least one of said plurality of operations to an operation list; switching an operation in said operation list to an active state; and scheduling all operations in said operation list that are in the active state to run on said wafer processing system." Kennedy discloses architecture for a computer that may be employed to control a wafer processing system. As such, Kennedy discloses inter-board communications and the like. It appears that the only lists referred to in Kennedy are a "signal list" used to communicate between the master computer and the I/O (e.g., see Kennedy Abstract) and a list of parameters that may be used to generate the signal list (see Kennedy, 7:32-34). In the event the present response does not address the concerns in the last office action, clarification as to which component of Kennedy is being read as an "operation list" is respectfully requested.

Kennedy does not disclose or suggest that signals in the "signal list" or parameters in "the parameter list" may be switched to an active state or scheduled for operation once becoming active in their respective lists. For example, it appears that all signals in the "signal list" must necessarily be active; there are no inactive signals in the

current "signal list," hence there is no need for switching any of them to an "active state" once in the "signal list." Unlike the "operations" of claim 1, the signals in the "signal list" or parameters in "the parameter list" are not scheduled for processing. On the contrary, as one of ordinary skill can appreciate, signals are generated, not scheduled for processing. Parameters provide data for an operation, and are also not scheduled for processing (parameters are not operands). At least for the foregoing reasons, it is respectfully submitted that claim 1 is patentable over Kennedy.

Claims 2-5 depend on claim 1. Therefore, claims 2-5 are patentable over Kennedy at least for the same reasons that claim 1 is patentable, as well as because of the combination of features set forth in these claims and in claim 1.

Claim 6 is patentable over Kennedy at least for reciting: "wherein at least one operation in the operation list including a sequence of actions for performing fabrication steps on a semiconductor wafer." Kennedy does not disclose or suggest an operation in an operation list that includes a sequence of wafer fabrication steps. Kennedy merely discloses architecture for inter-card communications in a computer system. Therefore, it is respectfully submitted that claim 6 is patentable over Kennedy.

Claims 7-9 depend on claim 6. Therefore, claims 7-9 are patentable over Kennedy at least for the same reasons that claim 6 is patentable, as well as because of the combination of features set forth in these claims and in claim 6.

Claim 10 is patentable over Kennedy at least for reciting: "said operation list including at least one operation for performing fabrication steps on a semiconductor wafer." Kennedy does not disclose or suggest an operation in an operation list for performing fabrication steps on a semiconductor wafer. Kennedy merely discloses architecture for inter-card communications in a computer system.

Claims 11-13 depend on claim 10. Therefore, claims 11-13 are patentable over Kennedy at least for the same reasons that claim 10 is patentable, as well as because of the combination of features set forth in these claims and in claim 10.

Recipe Operations

Claims 4, 5, 9, 12, and 13 recite "recipe operations." Careful review of Kennedy, specially the sections pointed out in the last office action, indicates that Kennedy does not disclose a recipe operation in any of its "operation list" (signal list, parameter list). As is well known, a recipe includes steps for fabricating a wafer. Kennedy recognizes the term "recipe" (Kennedy, 4:62-64), but not in the context of an operation list. Kennedy has no disclosure as to how recipes may be scheduled for processing, let alone using them as operations in an operation list. Kennedy does not disclose how recipes may be switched (i.e., from a state other than active) to an active state once added in an operation list.

In the event this response does not address the concerns noted in the last office action, clarification is respectfully requested as to which "operation" in Kennedy is being read as a recipe operation so that Applicants may properly respond.

Conclusion

For at least the above reasons, it is respectfully submitted that claims 1-13 are in condition for allowance. The Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned at (408)436-2112 for any questions.

If for any reason an insufficient fee has been paid, the Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge the insufficiency to Deposit Account No. 50-2427.

Respectfully submitted,
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